

## Message Text

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ACTION NEA-10

INFO OCT-01 ISO-00 DHA-02 SSM-03 IO-13 CIAE-00 DODE-00  
PM-04 H-01 INR-07 L-03 NSAE-00 NSC-05 PA-01 PRS-01  
SP-02 SS-15 USIA-06 SAJ-01 MCT-01 /076 W  
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R 151027Z FEB 77  
FM AMEMBASSY DAMASCUS  
TO SECSTATE WASHDC 1772  
INFO AMEMBASSY AMMAN  
AMEMBASSY BEIRUT  
AMEMBASSY CAIRO  
AMEMBASSY JIDDA

C O N F I D E N T I A L DAMASCUS 1041

E.O. 11652: GDS  
TAGS: PFOR, SY, US  
SUBJECT: DISSENTING VIEW ON SETTLEMENT PROCESS

1. SUMMARY. SYRIAN COLUMNIST TOLD US HE BELIEVES SARG WAS TESTING WILL OF NEW US ADMINISTRATION IN SOUTH LEBANON TO SEE HOW FAR WE WILL GO TO ASSIST ASAD OBTAIN SYRIAN OBJECTIVES. HE CLAIMED A US STRATEGY TO PROLONG SETTLEMENT PROCESS WOULD BE "RUINOUS" TO SYRIA AND EGYPT. HE CONCLUDED MOST SYRIANS WANT PEACE WITH ISRAEL BUT MANY OPPOSE CLOSER TIES WITH US THAT SETTLEMENT MIGHT BRING. END SUMMARY.

2. LOCAL COLUMNIST TOLD US FEB 13 THAT HE BELIEVES SARG WAS TESTING WILL OF NEW US ADMINISTRATION IN SOUTH LEBANON TO SEE HOW FAR WASHINGTON WOULD GO TO ASSIST ASAD OBTAIN SYRIAN OBJECTIVES. CITING AFTERNOON RADIO BROADCASTS (PRESUMABLY ISRAELI) THAT SYRIAN TROOPS WITHDRAWING FROM NABATIYAH, HE TERMED RESULTS A "FIASCO." BOTH ISRAELIS AND LEBANESE CHRISTIANS UPSET WITH LATEST SYRIAN MILITARY MANEUVERS IN LEBANON. "IF YOU WON'T BACK ASAD IN SOUTH LEBANON, WHERE YOU SUPPOSEDLY AGREE WITH HIS AIMS, CAN HE BE CONFIDENT YOU WILL HELP HIM  
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TO REACH PEACE WITH ISRAEL?" JOURNALIST ASKED.

3. REGARDING SETTLEMENT PROCESS ITSELF, HE REMARKED THAT, "YOU AMERICANS SEEM TO SHARE ISRAEL'S STRATEGY FOR PEACE, A PROLONGED PROCESS TO TEST TUR INTENTIONS. THIS WILL BE RUINOUS FOR SYRIA, AND PROBABLY EGYPT AS WELL. WE NEED ASAD'S ATTENTION ON OUR INTERNAL DEVELOPMENT, NOT OVERLY PROLONGED DIPLOMATIC STRATEGY

SESSIONS. DON'T YOU REALIZE WE NOW HAVE A SOCIETY WHERE FUR COATS ARE AVAILABLE BUT GOOD BREAD IS NOT? ASAD MUST RESOLVE THESE ECONOMIC PROBLEMS.

4. SECOND REASON SOURCE OPPOSED SETTLEMENT ARRANGED BY US WAS THAT IT WOULD INEVITABLY FOSTER CLOSER SYRO-AMERICAN TIES AND GREATER US EFFORTS TO DEVELOP SYRIA. "HOWEVER, WESTERN DEVELOPMENT IS NOT REAL DEVELOPMENT; THERE IS LITTLE MASS APPEAL. WESTERN BUSINESSMEN WHO COME TO SYRIA ALWAYS WANT A QUICK PROFIT, BUT THE SOVIETS AND EAST EUROPEANS STAY FOR THE LONG TERM. SINCE ASAD OPENED SYRIA TO THE WEST, OUR ELITE HAS GROWN MUCH MORE WEALTHY BUT THE MASSES HAVE SUFFERED FROM RISING COST OF LIVING AND MIDDLE CLASS IS SHRINKING. IT IS NOT THE SETTLEMENT WITH ISRAEL WE MIND, BUT YOUR STRENGTHENED FOOTHOLD IN SYRIA THAT WOULD COME IN ITS WAKE. THIS IS WHY OPPOSITION VOICES ARE RAISED WHENEVER HOPES FOR A SETTLEMENT BECOME STRONGER."

5. COMMENT: SOURCE'S INSIGHTS VALUABLE BECAUSE OF HIS POSITION AS SYRIAN OPINION MOLDER AND HIS ABILITY TO ARTICULATE IN COHERENT FRAMEWORK OFTEN FREE-FLOWING SYRIA SUSPICIONS ABOUT US INTENTIONS. HIS COMMENTS HAVE IN PAST GENERALLY REFLECTED ATTITUDES OF SYRIAN LEFTISTS.  
MURPHY

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## Message Attributes

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**Review Markings:**  
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